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ABSTRACT

In this paper, an attempt has been made to define some of the difficulties and concerns which local school district administrators have to deal with in the implementation of a new program--career education. Career education is envisioned as a bold change of great magnitude, and there is a thrust for swift introduction of career education programs in school systems. However, schools usually cannot respond rapidly to needs for renewal or change. Some areas where problems will be encountered in the change process are: (1) interim and task force organizational structures and linkage-related issues, (2) staffing model problems including the difference between utilizing existing staff or recruiting staff, (3) continuity of organizational operations and maintaining expertise roles, (4) role conflict and the problem of alienation of the school principal, (5) teacher issues and teacher groups, and (6) community issues, particularly minority concerns. (SB)

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PROBLEMS IN THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

by

George Smith

Vol. 16, No. 1 September, 1972

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FOREWORD

Dr. George Smith is currently Superintendent of Schools in Mesa, Arizona. He originally prepared this Bulletin on "Problems in the Organization and Administration of Career Education Programs" for the 1972 National Conference on Career Education for Professors of Educational Administration which was sponsored by the Center for Vocational Education, Ohio State University.

His report represents a compilation of strategies found to be effective by experienced school administrators in developing and implementing a Career Education Program.

Among the several areas discussed in this Bulletin are: CHANGE PROCESSES AND PROBLEMS . . . LINKAGE PROBLEMS . . . GOAL SETTING . . . PROCESS SKILLS . . . ADVANTAGES OF TEMPORARY SYSTEMS . . . ORGANIZATION PROBLEMS . . . PERSONNEL AND STAFFING . . . COMMUNITY CONCERNS.

We believe you will find Dr. Smith's comments timely, interesting, and useful.

--The Editors

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
Change Processes and Problems	2
Linkage Problems and Temporary Systems	3
Input Overload	4
Unrealistic Goal Setting	4
Lack of Process Skills	5
Alienation	5
Linkage Failure	6
Advantages of Temporary Systems	7
Organizational Problems Summary	9
Personnel and Staffing	10
Staffing Problems Summary	12
Internal Relationships Role Conflict	13
Teacher Groups	17
Community Concerns	18
Summary	19
References	21

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

Diagram		Page
1	A Tall Administrative Structure	9
2	The Udy Paradigm of Organization	15
3	A Tentative Conflict Model of Internal Relationships	16

PROBLEMS IN THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Introduction

Man has many ways in which he reacts to the inevitable. An old proverb deals with the reactions of a native population on a tiny Pacific isle when informed a tidal wave was forthcoming. One group began a festival of revelry, another followed a leader to the mountain top to meditate until the end, while the third group began investigating methods of living under water.

Schoolmen are in the same dilemma today. A fast-moving society has created an enormous technological revolution which has left many students graduating from the schools lost in the swiftness of societal change. Youth has responded by rebelling, by dropping out or copping out, or by clogging the welfare rolls which compound the social dynamite in the nation's inner cities and streets. Schoolmen have ignored the problem, have responded by calling for solutions which reinforce or fail to touch the problem, or simply hoping, that more faith will produce a solution.

Educators are just beginning to ascertain how to live with the problem by creating alternatives and changing the system, or in the language of our Pacific islanders, how to live under water.

There can be little doubt that one of the major thrusts creating career education is the striking need for relevance based on the reality of the present U. S. labor market. But career education is more than just economically

motivated. It recognizes the potent implications of earning a livelihood in this country as a measure of the total human development as a human being. This marks the emphasis in career education as critically and dramatically different from one of a narrowly defined emphasis in vocational education.

Change Processes and Problems

Career education is envisioned as a bold change of great magnitude on the contemporary American education scene. Balances in the preparation of alternatives for American youth other than the college prep type have been introduced swiftly on a broad scale basis. Promise and potential are in the balance with such a collapsed time schedule. Schools cannot usually respond rapidly to needs for renewal or change.

First, most school systems are not organized to respond quickly to change. They are built on assumptions of logical decision making with due deliberation following the established lines of authority and the existing division of labor. In times of slow external stress, such organizational structures may be adequate (1: Burns, Stalker). In times of rapid external change in the environment they are clearly inadequate.

Special project implementation with a collapsed time schedule creates additional difficulties in addition to the usual problems confronting changing programs. Comparison can be made to explorations in the wilderness: witness the explorer who sets out to cross Death Valley, judges his route inappropriate, and changes direction with dispatch. Many times in new programs, decisions are made at critical times which change the original goal.

This presents the first problem in the organization and administration of special projects like career education programs. From the point of view

of a superintendent, the alternative is to organize quickly outside the school structure, build in lines of linkage to that structure, and move towards what has been called a project type of organization (10: Stewart). This alters the normal structure into a "matrix" with overlapping lines of authority and positions and creates problems of its own. The largest long-range concern must be directed towards the problem which all innovations organized outside the normal school structure must face, that of being "fenced off" and ultimately abandoned.

Such problems may strike the practitioner as unnecessarily esoteric at this point, but a major purpose of this paper is to alert superintendents and professors of educational administration to one of their major functions, i.e., to anticipate and head off possible problems by confronting them from the beginning. In Mesa, the career education proposal was hammered out by a task force approach in ten days. It was entirely accomplished by in-house expertise. The model of those ten days (a project administration model) is simply extended in the larger Comprehensive Career Development project, though on a much broader scale. Given the shortened timelines established by national priority, it was imperative that we had to staff from within.

Linkage Problems and Temporary Systems

Due to the abbreviated time requirements established by The Center of Vocational and Technical Education the career education project was organized outside the line and staff structure of the Mesa Public Schools. In attempting to anticipate the problems caused by such organization it is necessary to examine the nature of temporary systems and their special problems (9: Miles). These may be classified as follows:

(1) input overload;

(2) unrealistic goal setting;

(3) lack of process skills;

(4) alienation; and

(5) linkage failure.

All of these problems have already been manifested to some degree in Mesa, and I suspect elsewhere as well.

Input Overload

The project officers of the career education program in Mesa were responding to the call for organization by The Center for Vocational and Technical Education, and trying to plan for local action, while being plagued by phone calls and inquiries by anxious members of the school system who were eager to get going. Meetings extended from early in the morning to late at night. Fatigue set in and some officers became "uptight" as the saying goes. Project management is not an uphill, slowly inclined plane of activities; it is bumpy, and contains peaks and plateaus. There are intense periods and slack periods. Planning can alleviate some of these problems, but not eliminate them completely.

The process of "fast-tracking" (to borrow a term from the construction industry) is salient to rapid organizational needs for response. Toleration for ambiguity, respect for human frustration and fatigue, and talent for fast modification of critical paths are essential qualities of project teams to resist counterproductive forces of input overload.

Unrealistic Goal Setting

Great rhetoric and high purpose often lead to unrealistic goals. In the beginning, the writing of a philosophy, the "call to arms," many briefings

and Rotary Club speeches make it appear as if talking about career education could bring it about. Later, the sober facts creep in. The system is large. It exists in a delicate and sensitive equilibrium. The system can be subtle and it can be brutal against change. It knows how to survive and it is always there. It doesn't go away.

Another phenomenon of unrealistic goal setting lies in the creation of rising expectations. Too often it is easy to begin blowing one's horn before the music has been completely written. If a group enterprise embarks upon a new venture, the venture's success can often be jeopardized by premature claims of success or viability. Groups often succumb to frustration if stated and publicized goals cannot be attained. Demoralization can be prevented by careful employment of realistic goal setting with patient explication of results. After all, actions speak louder than words.

Lack of Process Skills

Interpersonal skills can lead to breakdown, not only of the innovators themselves, but as they attempt to carry out their ideas, into the total system itself. The Mesa Comprehensive Career Development staff spent many hours processing their own thoughts, confronting each other, and securing consensus. Experience with other innovative programs has demonstrated the need for periodic cleansing, open sessions, retreats, and other safety valve confrontations to deal with the emotional heat of change.

Alienation

The Mesa Comprehensive Career Development effort must continually watch for the development of the "we happy few" syndrome. This may occur not only among themselves as they weather the change effort together, but foster islands

of resistance due to the adoption of the training model which envisions groups of teachers being initially trained and later training other groups. Capitalizing upon the "ripple effect" is one thing, creating groups of "ins" and "outs" is another.

Linkage Failure

As the career education program begins to expand and pick up momentum, it is planned to move into the regular on-going program. To accomplish this system-wide is gambling upon mass acceptance. The inertia of a large system is simply too much to move. Linking the temporary system to the permanent system requires the utilization of pilot probes, field sites where change is malleable and manageable. Also, it helps the project get its foot in the door, gain some momentum--which is always painfully slow--and acquire adherents from the field who have some stake in seeing it expand.

Central to any process is a clear determination of what the real objective is. For example, in the development of career education, we have confronted ourselves and The Center for Vocational and Technical Education with the question, "Is the goal to develop a product (instructional packages) or is it to implement those packages?" If implementation is the goal, then consideration must be given to problems of ownership and group involvement. The "principle of participation" is a vital bylaw of the process of change in the successful school districts.

After all, career education must be owned by the teachers when it is finished. If teachers do not own the program, there cannot be any linkage. Teacher ownership is critical. This issue is highlighted over a discussion related to curriculum materials. If materials are purchased, teachers must

in some way shape their usage and their application prior to purchase, or it will be too easy to make a half-hearted effort or to scapegoat the curriculum should the task prove too difficult. Curriculum developed by teachers has a greater potential to acquire their professional loyalty and, as such, it will more than get a chance to prove itself.

Teacher ownership develops from meaningful and genuine involvement in shaping the program. In addition, management may succeed in carrying out its objectives, but support must emanate from the top of the line organization and middle levels to the classroom teachers. Innovations which portend large change can be isolated because they were developed outside of the structure to begin with. In Mesa, this has been the case and we have planned ahead by naming the director who himself was a former line officer and has not relinquished his official responsibilities, but is temporarily "on leave" to the career education task force.

Advantages of Temporary Systems

The major advantages of Comprehensive Career Development in Mesa as a temporary system is that it can move quickly and reach immediately. Relationships tend to be much less formal than in the rest of the school system. Ideas can be generated and implemented in a matter of hours or of days. We have planned to build in linkages with personnel selection spanning both systems, since personnel have not been separated from their former responsibilities. The career development project must have autonomy and independence, but not to the degree that the efforts are isolated from the system thus dooming the longitudinal goals of those same efforts completely.

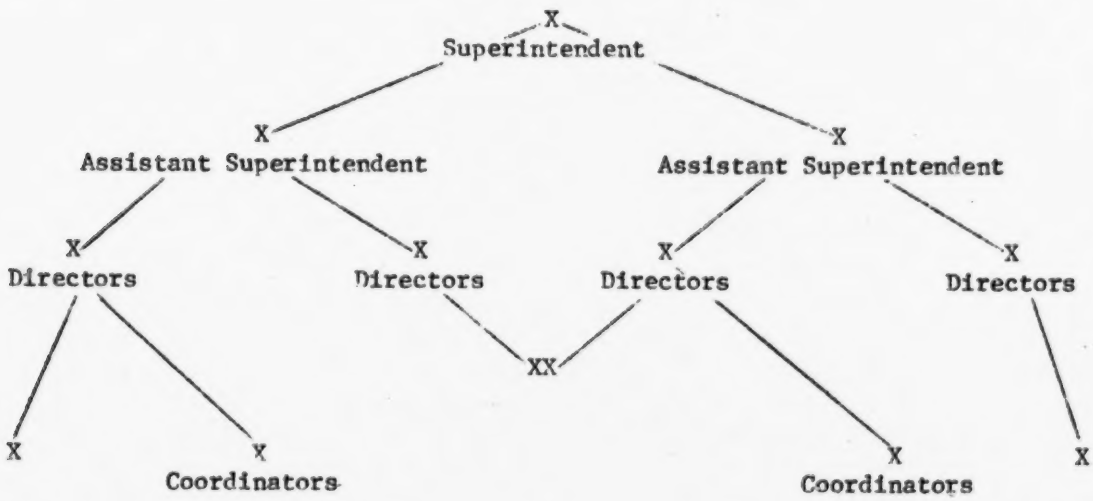
A temporary system can also benefit from the advantages afforded educational organizations from internal performance contracting. The internal

performance contract procedures employed over the past two years in the Mesa district have demonstrated the efficacy of sharing goals and resources with the organization's personnel. With establishment of shared goals and resource allocations in the Request for Proposal mode, the personnel have an opportunity to creatively develop strategies to accomplish those goals within the guidelines and resources. Accountability for the end result is also much more available since criteria and resources are not out from under the direct influence of the implementing staff.

Temporary systems avoid adding to the "tallness" of the administrative organization. Some recent research confirms our own empirical findings in this regard. The taller the structure, the more removed the teacher feels from the action, the more strange the goings-on, the greater the feelings of alienation and hostility. Carpenter (2) found that teachers who lived in administrative structures which were "tall" as shown on the following page, possessed less feelings of prestige within the community, less feelings of professional authority associated with their position, and saw less opportunity to participate in setting school goals.

A temporary system becomes an intermediary force. It is not central office; and if it is able to maintain a close watch on the pulse of the system, can piggyback on field energy for change which may be even unrecognized by the central office itself. The major point here is that in the organization of career education programs, we have chosen not to add to the permanent bureaucratic structure. We do not envision a Bureau of Career Education in the Mesa Public Schools in the future; rather we see the concept so diffused in the program that such a bureau would be unnecessary. By capitalizing upon the project management approach, we have accomplished our goals and can utilize personnel in other temporary systems later.

Diagram #1 - A Tall Administrative Structure



Organizational Problems Summary

These problems are not the only ones affiliated with getting career education moving in a school system, but they have dominated our thinking in establishing such a program in Mesa. We have attempted to anticipate potential problems by creating a structure which avoided some of the ones briefly discussed.

Professors of educational administration could be of immense help by developing inservice programs and case studies on various types of temporary systems used in education. Taxonomies of such systems, technologies and methods to ameliorate some of the problems with the utilization of them via systematic research would be of great help.

Personnel and Staffing

It has already been mentioned that the shortened time constraints made staffing from within almost a foregone conclusion. The necessity of obtaining personnel familiar with the informal organizational system and the desire to build in people linkages early in the developmental periods also enhanced this approach. We were fortunate to have high-caliber personnel.

Some years ago with the present superintendency we actively recruited personnel from outside the system. Thus, we have not perpetuated our weaknesses. In times of emergency such as the one regarding staffing career education, promotion from within was not a weakness, i.e., the potential weakness of such an approach of perpetuating internal blind spots was not a problem. Without balanced recruiting, however, we may have had much more of a problem with internal promotion. I imagine in larger systems, or systems where long years of only internal promotion existed, this could be a real problem. The immediate start-up demanded in the program could only be accomplished by promoting some personnel who were not suited nor possessed the necessary skills.

We are looking to short-term staffing. The project staff will be gone within five to seven years, the programs which they developed hopefully incorporated into the school system. The members of the present temporary system shall have returned to their regular posts, been promoted, gone into other temporary systems within the school system, or left the system altogether. We were fortunate in having a forerunner to staffing in the Mesa Differentiated Staffing Project which pioneered with temporary systems which were established and abolished after introducing internal performance contracting (3) and

several other unique and innovative ideas (4). In fact, the Mesa schools piloted a unique Center for Educational Advancement (CEA) which has been an in-house organ of change for over six years. Introducing a change of this magnitude could only be accomplished with the past experience of the Center for Educational Advancement and a host of other projects and programs which have established the climate for temporary systems to be born and to be terminated.

Some problems in staffing have occurred which have merely amplified problems of the regular school system structure. For example, there are inevitable conflicts between specialists and generalists in such an organization or line and staff. There is a distinct tendency for staff role incumbents to become independent, using their knowledge base as a wedge against organizational control. This results in continual skirmishes and occasional jurisdictional conflict. In times of demand for rapid organizational change, such conflicts can become overblown due to the "hothouse" effect of the change itself.

The problem of continuing leadership is partially resolved by the fact that as personnel from the temporary system of the career education program work back into either the normal system or other temporary systems, this human linkage assures a continuity of first-rate, experienced leadership. Promotion from the principalship level into higher middle management positions assures leadership continuity at that level. The hardest problem to face is the maintenance of high-quality technical personnel, the real specialists who must move on to other situations which demand their services. Perhaps here the best a school system can hope for is that over the transition period a reservoir of technical talent is developed in-house to maintain the innovation

time. But the problem still remains. Highly technical people are itinerant. Unless continuity is more deliberately planned, it is more difficult to obtain in these areas.

Staffing Problems Summary

Staffing problems from the perspective of a temporary system are accelerated by intense external pressure, exacerbate line/staff conflict, and promote the short-term utilization of highly specialized staff personnel. School systems are relative newcomers to the itinerant specialist at the top management levels. Personnel policies and procedures are geared to the more stable, "up the system" type of administrative advancement. Whereas in the past, only the superintendent may have been selected from outside the system, the trend will include many other types of specialists now supplied by The Center for Vocational and Technical Education, which highly sophisticated programs like career education will demand in the future. Internal conflict between the older and more entrenched line organization offices with its series of chairs contrasted with the professionally mobile R and D man, system analysts and on-site evaluators, portend a clash in professional orientation and values.

The temporary system may be profane with the sacred and skeptical of the sacrosanct local idiosyncracies because mobility provides a broadened base for comparison and insures some independence. The traditional administrative structure is parochialism and concern with the unique local exigencies which makes them more dependent. Professors of educational administration can help by illustrating in what ways the interpersonal dimensions of this problem may be diagnosed and ameliorated. Mobility patterns of such

specialists should be the subject of study, with various professional orientations looked at from the sociological perspective, and from the psychology of management and management theory.

Internal Relationships Role Conflict

In highlighting the maintenance of organizational equilibrium, Lonsdale (7) mentions that such balance is related to the meeting of individual needs in the organization and the organization being adequate to fulfilling the tasks central to its existence. As gaps appear between needs not being fulfilled and tasks going unmet, both morale (which is essentially a "gap" model as presented by Lonsdale) and the organizational productivity suffer.

Within this framework Lonsdale (7) discusses role conflict. One manner in which role conflict occurs is that two reference groups have different expectations of a role. This has occurred not only under a high-powered program like career education, but with smaller programs as well. Career education merely enlarges the problem. Basically, institutional expectations have changed remarkably for the role of the school principal. School systems are demanding that principals absorb and acquire vast new realms of technical information in terms of group dynamics, theories of instruction, instructional technology, etc. It means new content, new skills, new concepts, new understandings, and new vocabulary.

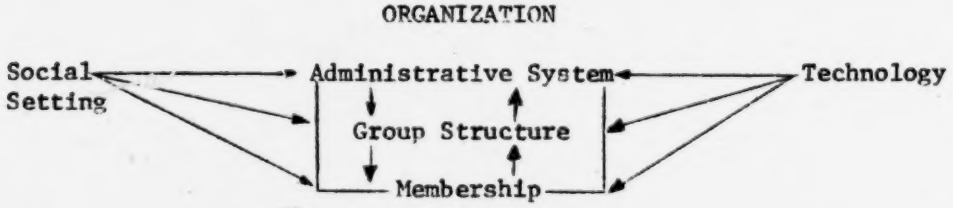
While school systems depend upon principals for support and understanding, and while they look to the principal for leadership at the unit level, the expectations of the teachers have not changed substantially. The principal is still the guy to send unruly students to for discipline, the guy to get the materials from, the guy to lean on for advice and reinforcement, and whether we like it or not, the guy to keep some of the pressures of central

office off their backs. The rising role expectations of central office, the anxiety created by such expectations as the principal's role becomes extended, and those occupying the role become increasingly more aware of what they don't know, create role conflict. The result for principals is lowered morale, status loss, sometimes hostility which may be more or less camouflaged depending upon the particular climate of the organization. The superintendent is placed in a dilemma, particularly in times of demands for instant upgrading of the organization's ability to deal with change. The easiest solution is to add specialists to the organization which solves a short-term problem but creates several longitudinal ones. First, the principals as a group are further alienated and frustrated. Second, added personnel have a way of becoming permanent. The point is that the problem of the role conflict presented to a system's principals has not really been solved.

We have responded in a variety of ways, none of them to date completely satisfactory. We have acquired a grant from the Kettering Foundation for principals at the secondary level to investigate and improve school climate, i.e., the principal-teacher interface. We have attempted to broaden the involvement of principals at the central level. The career education project is planning to hold several intensive training sessions for principals so that they feel more comfortable with the concepts and vocabulary of our effort. None of these, however, has served to reduce our expectations of principals. In fact, given the present constraints in career education it would be an impossibility. As Udy (11: p. 690) noted, "The more complex the technology and/or the greater the amount of pressure exerted on the organization from the social setting, the greater the emphasis on administration."

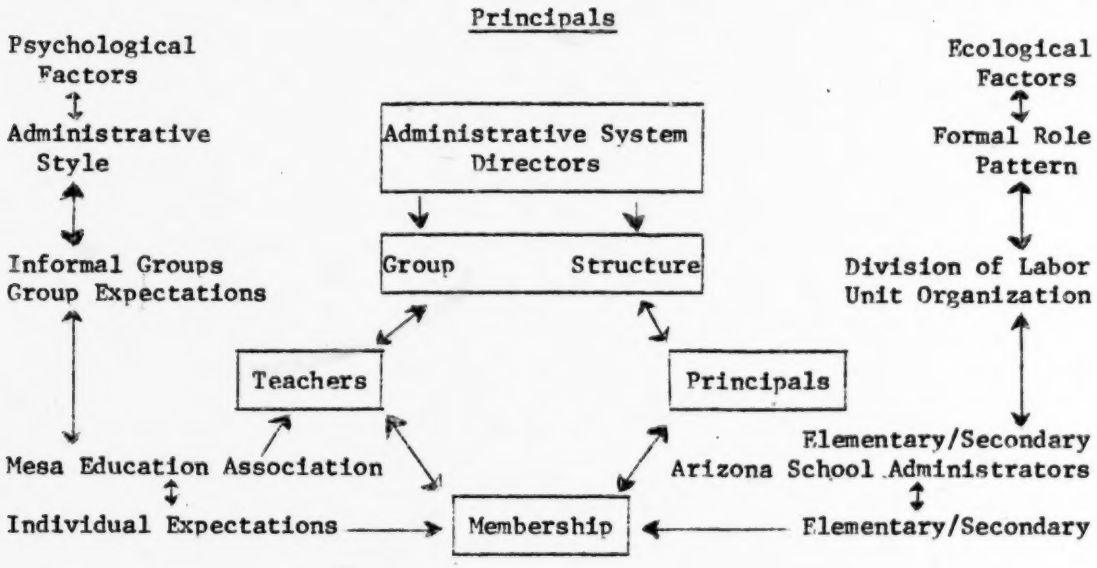
Perhaps this and other phenomena in terms of role conflict and internal relationships may best be understood by re-examining a model of organization developed by Udy. In diagram #2 his model is shown (11: Udy).

Diagram #2 - The Udy Paradigm of Organization



The degree of external pressure exerted on the system both from the social setting and from technology increases the need for coordination and control within the organization. Thus, while there may be a need for a diverse and creative response at the unit level in an experimental project, strong external pressures on the school system inevitably demand higher levels of coordination and control which will tend to negate individual school unit responses except within carefully prescribed parameters. Not only is this contrary to psychological principles of deriving ownership on the part of the teachers and principals, it increases the role conflict between these two groups in the organization. An extrapolation of Udy's (11) paradigm may illustrate this point.

Diagram #3 - A Tentative Conflict Model of Internal Relationships



Deleting for the moment the variables of the Udy model of social setting and technology, the conflict model attempts to illustrate the internal relationship of the principal who is split between three groups. The principal relates both formally and informally to a group of teachers (his faculty), his peers (other principals), and his superior (a director). His referent group has a formal or ecologically defined relationship. This relationship is most usually defined on the "TO" or table of organization. Principals are differentiated on the basis of school division (elementary or secondary). Informally they may be differentiated in their peer group (and referent teachers' group) on the basis that they may belong to two professional organizations, one exclusively for administrators within the state--Arizona School Administrators--and the other related to the statewide

teachers' organization, the Arizona Education Association. Each of the informal groupings possesses social and psychological expectations. It is in this latter arena that we are experiencing perceptual differences. In some cases, expectations are simply not compatible. This is complicated by a short time schedule and highly intense demands for technological change. Theories of organizational equilibrium help us describe our difficulties, but they do not suggest practical solutions when a school system is struggling with an innovation of great magnitude which is to be implemented on a broad front basis. Perhaps our friends in educational administration could point out some research or alternative theoretical models which could help us in this regard.

Teacher Groups

I have not mentioned the function of teacher groups within the context of this discussion, but I feel that without some mention of their growing importance and weight in educational change, we would simply not be relevant. Internal negotiating procedures have changed the flow of decisions within educational organizations. That this will involve the NEA affiliates and AFT locals is inevitable, especially with the comprehensiveness demanded by career education (8: Marland). To the extent that career education portends a change in teacher position or salary, or endangers present prerogatives, it will be resisted (5: English).

We have experienced the most resistance in Mesa from secondary teachers who are fearful and doubtful about a program which cuts across their disciplines. On the other hand, if career education simply alters the present curriculum within the present structure of the educational system, it will have a much better (though less revolutionary) chance for early success.

Morale and job satisfaction factors are often the domain of the teachers' organizations. Projects, by their very nature, are a shift in educational practice which can affect measureably that domain. An example is the procedure of implementing programs with cumbersome funding sources which lie outside the control of the local school district. If funding is external and not responsible to the schedule of employee work and payroll, morale and job satisfaction can be seriously influenced negatively. Teachers' organizations have little sympathy with the school administration's problems in coordinating external funding. One of our projects was set back several months simply because funding was tardy and a summer teachers' workshop was in progress. The demoralization that swept the teachers when the payroll was two weeks late was unbelievable. Preplanning and careful consideration of the needs of the teachers' organizations seems to need to be mandatory for the sucess of curriculum R and D effort.

There appears to be little research as to how and what teacher unions will accept or reject, and very little empirical data in the form of case studies to assist in planning by districts without congenial relationships with such unions. Studies of American teacher unions, their practices and positions on major educational issues, is sorely needed in this regard.

Community Concerns

The Mesa Public Schools have over the past years completed several community power structure surveys (6: Laird). This data was used to form the criteria for citizen participation in the Comprehensive Career Development project. It may be interesting to note that in the last power structure

survey based on a random sample of administrators, teachers, minority parents, and service clubs, that the administrators as one sub-group identified the top ten persons with a correlation of .94, the highest of any of the sub-groups solicited. The community sub-group had a correlation of .87.

The conclusion of the investigator was that "the data would indicate that the Mesa Public School administrators have a keen perception of community power as compared with the summary composite findings." (6: Laird, p. 21)

The community has responded with keen interest and elan. The minority community has been responsive, but reserved in its reception. For one thing, minority parents express fears that the Anglo majority will use the program to counsel their students into second-class, lower-status occupations. They are also afraid that even if the program is successful and their children are convinced that they can join an occupation, the unions will freeze them out and the training will be for naught.

There seems to be little in the way of direction available to the local school district in planning a program to involve the community in a way in which problems can be averted. Professors of educational administration need to help in the development of relevant models for the in-depth utilization of community groups and special interest organizations.

Summary

In this paper, I have attempted to define some of the difficulties and concerns which local school district administrators have to deal with in the implementation of a new program--career education. Generic to local school districts are many problems anytime a change is attempted. We are

still in process, but it is safe to say that some observations can be made as we monitor ourselves along the developmental line. The key points which our introspection has evidenced include:

(1) interim and task force organizational structures and linkage-related issues;

(2) staffing model problems including the difference between utilizing existing staff or recruited staff (internal vs. external staffing);

(3) continuity of organizational operations and maintaining expertise roles;

(4) role conflict and the problem of alienation of the school principal;

(5) teacher issues and teacher groups;

(6) community issues, particularly minority concerns.

At the same time, I tried to indicate where professors of educational administration could be of help to districts such as our own in the process of developing and implementing a program of career education.

It is my hope that this effort will serve as a bridge towards establishing productive dialogue as our project continues.

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